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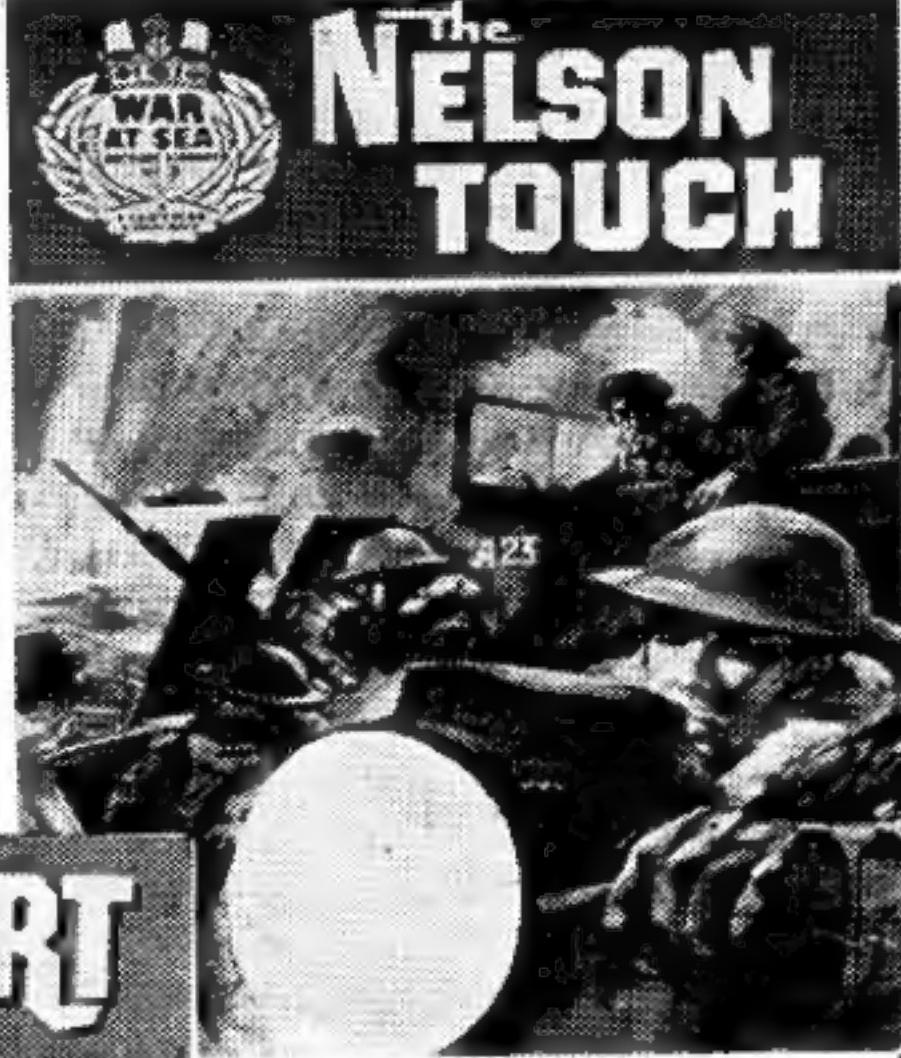
RAW COURAGE



LOOK!
THESE
TWO
TERRIFIC
ISSUES
NOW
ON
SALE



ESCORT



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MAKE SURE—Get your copies—TODAY!

RAW COURAGE

In Italy in 1943 there were some British battalions with such proud fighting records that they were always first in line for the toughest missions. Commandos in everything but name, such a unit was the 1st. Midshires.



Chapter 1. *The Furious Fool*

IT WAS IN SEPTEMBER THAT THEIR C.O., COLONEL CUTLER, CALLED HIS OFFICERS TOGETHER TO TELL THEM THEIR LATEST ASSIGNMENT. IT WAS TO SPEARHEAD THE EIGHTH ARMY'S DRIVE ON THE FORTIFIED TOWN OF CAMPELLO.



AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A DRAFT OF SIXTY MEN HAD ALREADY DISEMBARKED AT TARANTO.-



AMONG THOSE MEN WAS PRIVATE JOHNNY SMITH — AN 'EAGER BEAVER', KEEN TO PLEASE, BUT WITH AN UNLUCKY KNACK OF MAKING A MESS OF EVERYTHING HE ATTEMPTED. HE CHOSE A SPOT WELL AWAY FROM THE OTHERS.

JUST THE PLACE!
I'LL KEEP MY RIFLE AND EQUIPMENT WELL PROTECTED FROM THE DEW; HERE.



AS SMITHY LAY DOZING HIS MIND FLASHED BACK TO THE DAY HE JOINED THE ARMY. HIS DAD AND HIS BROTHER, BERT HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE STATION TO SEE HIM OFF.

GOOD-BYE, JOHNNY. I'M GLAD YOU'LL BE JOINING A FIGHTING UNIT.
I'LL BE PROUD OF YOU!

AND IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I'LL BE JOINING UP, TOO.



Raw Courage

JOHNNY HAD KNOWN THEN WHAT WAS IN HIS FATHER'S MIND. IN THE 1914-1918 WAR, THE OLDER MAN HAD BEEN PUT IN THE LABOUR CORPS BECAUSE OF SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS AND HAD BEEN BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED BECAUSE HE HAD NEVER BEEN IN ACTION.



AFTER BASIC TRAINING, SMITHY HAD BEEN POSTED TO THE 2nd. MIDSHIRES. FROM THE FIRST HE WAS AS KEEN AS MUSTARD, BUT IT SOON BECAME PLAIN THAT HE WOULD NEVER MAKE A SMART SOLDIER.



Raw Courage

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SMITHY WAS NATURALLY AWKWARD AND UNTIDY. DESPITE ALL HIS EFFORTS, IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME STORY . . .

THIS BED IS A DISGRACE!
PUT HIM ON A CHARGE,
SERGEANT.

YESSIR!
NAME?

SMITH,
SAR'NT!



IT SEEMED TO SMITHY THAT HE SPENT MORE TIME ON JANKERS THAN HE DID ON NORMAL TRAINING.

LIFT THOSE KNEES
UP, YOU SLOPPY
LOT!

GOOD
THING DAD
CAN'T SEE
ME NOW!



Raw Courage

ONE DAY, HE OVERHEARD HIS PLATOON SERGEANT TALKING TO THE COMPANY COMMANDER...



AFTER THAT, SMITHY TRIED HARDER THAN EVER. HE WAS STRONG AND TIRELESS AND WHEN IT CAME TO THE ASSAULT COURSE HE WAS AHEAD OF EVERYONE...



Raw Courage

HE WAS STILL GOING STRONG WHEN EVERYONE ELSE
WAS PRACTICALLY COLLAPSING FROM EXHAUSTION.

THAT
CHAP SMITH
IS AS TOUGH
AS THEY
COME!

YES—IF ONLY HE'D
SMARTEN HIMSELF UP
A LITTLE.



THROWING DUMMY
GRENADES, SMITHY
BEAT THE BATTALION
RECORD BY YARDS...

AMAZING!
THE LONGEST
THROW I'VE
EVER SEEN!



Raw Courage

BUT ON THE RANGE THROWING LIVE GRENADES, SMITHY RAN TRUE TO FORM! A MILLS 36 SLIPPED OUT OF HIS HAND, HIT THE TOP OF THE BANK AND ROLLED BACK INTO THE TRENCH . . .



NO ONE WAS HURT, BUT IN THE EXCITEMENT SMITHY CHARGED INTO THE BOMBING OFFICER AND KNOCKED HIM FLAT!

"YOU CLUMSY OAF!"



Raw Courage

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WHILE SMITHY WAS BLOWING UP THE FIELDS OF ENGLAND, THE WAR IN ITALY WAS RAGING FIERCELY. THE 2ND. MIDSHIRES RECEIVED ORDERS TO DRAFT THIRTY VOLUNTEERS TO THE CRACK 1ST. BATTALION.



SMITHY HEARD HIS MATES TALKING ABOUT IT IN THE HUT THAT NIGHT - AND HIS AMBITION WAS FIRED...

THE FIRST BATTALION
IS A REAL FIGHTING OUTFIT
— AS GOOD AS THE GUARDS!



Raw Courage

WHEN THE ADJUTANT SCANNED THE LIST OF VOLUNTEERS TWO DAYS LATER, HE WAS OVERJOYED.

LOOK AT THIS, SIR — IT'S ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE! PRIVATE SMITH HAS VOLUNTEERED!

SMITH? BUT THESE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE OUR BEST MEN!

I KNOW, SIR, BUT WE'VE BEEN WANTING TO GET RID OF SMITH FOR MONTHS. PERHAPS THE FIRST BATTALION WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE A SOLDIER OUT OF HIM.

I DOUBT IT! BUT — ALL RIGHT, PUT HIM DOWN.



SO PRIVATE JOHNNY SMITH MARCHED OFF WITH THE DRAFT, HIS HEART SWELLING WITH PRIDE.

DAD WILL BE TICKLED PINK WHEN I WRITE AND TELL HIM I'M JOINING A PICKED UNIT, ON ACTIVE SERVICE!



Chapter 2. *Into the Line*

AT LAST, SMITHY HAD ARRIVED IN TARANTO, ONLY A FEW HOURS FROM THE FIGHTING LINE.

IT'S REAL
SOLDIERING FROM
HERE ON. I'LL MAKE
A SPECIAL EFFORT
FOR THE OLD
MAN'S SAKE...



DOG-TIRED HE WAS SOON SLEEPING SOUNDLY, AND HE WAS STILL ASLEEP WHEN SERGEANT MASON CALLED THE ROLL AT DAWN . . .

WHERE
THE HECK IS
SMITH? ANYONE
SEEN HIM?

HE SNOOZED
OFF ON HIS OWN
LAST NIGHT,
SARGE.



Raw Courage

THE SERGEANT SEARCHED EVERYWHERE — BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF SMITHY...

"IF HE'S DESERTED HE'LL BE IN FOR A PACK OF TROUBLE!"

"SMITHY WOULDN'T DESERT, SARGE. HE'LL TURN UP!"



WHEN THE TAFT BOARDED THE TRAIN BOUND FOR SORREGNO, PRIVATE SMITH WAS STILL MISSING.

"THERE'LL BE A HECK OF A ROW OVER THIS! THEY SAY COLONEL CUTLER OF THE FIRST BATTALION IS A REAL TERROR!"



IT WAS HALF AN HOUR LATER WHEN THE BANGING AND SHUNTING OF WAGONS DISTURBED JOHNNY SMITHY'S SLUMBERS...



SMITHY REALISED HE HAD MADE A PRIZE BOOB. AGHAST, HE REPORTED TO THE MOVEMENT CONTROL OFFICER...



AN HOUR LATER, SMITHY WAS ON HIS WAY NORTH IN A MIXED CONVOY. BEFORE NOON, THEY COULD HEAR THE SJELLEN THUNDER OF GUNS IN THE DISTANCE.



Raw Courage

MEANWHILE, THE TRAIN CARRYING THE REST OF THE DRAFT HAD RUN INTO TROUBLE NEAR RUGGIO. THREE STUKAS CAME SCREAMING OUT OF THE SUN. A BOMB LANDED CLOSE TO THE TRACK AND WITH A GRINDING, BUMMING CRASH THE TRAIN PLOUGHED TO A STOP.



A HADE OF MACHINE-GUN BULLETS STITCHED THE WAGONS AS THE STUKAS WHEELED AND ROARED BACK.



TWO BRITISH FIGHTERS SOON CHASED THE STUKAS OFF. SAVE FOR A FEW SLIGHTLY WOUNDED MEN, THE MIDSHIRE DRAFT WAS UNINJURED.

THIS IS
A SET-BACK, LADS.
WE'RE GOING TO BE
LATE REACHING
THE BATTALION
NOW...



SO IT WAS SMITHY WHO ARRIVED AT SORREGNO FIRST, AFTER ALL.

YES, CHUM,
WE'RE THE FIRST
MIDSHIRES...

HAVE
YOU COME TO
JOIN US?

STONE
ME! THIS MUST
BE OUR LUCKY
DAY!



Raw Courage

THE NEWS WAS BROUGHT TO COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER, OF 'D' COMPANY...



C.S.M. POTTER STARED AT SM THY IN HORROR.



COLONEL CUTLER ARRIVED ON THE SCENE FOLLOWED BY THE ADJUTANT, CAPTAIN BROOKING.

WHAT'S GOING ON,
SERGEANT-MAJOR?

IT'S THE NEW DRAFT, SIR—
OR ALL THAT'S ARRIVED SO FAR!



THE C.O.'S ICE-BLUE EYES REGARDED SMITHY COLDLY, AND A SHUDDER SHOOK HIS RAMROD FRAME. LIKE SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER, HE WAS AN EX-GUARDSMAN, AND THE SCRUFFY APPEARANCE OF PRIVATE SMITH WAS AN AFFRONT TO HIS VERY NATURE.

HOW IS IT YOU'RE HERE ON YOUR OWN?

I—I OVERSLEPT, SIR—AND THE DRAFT WENT ON THE TRAIN WITHOUT ME. I CAME ON BY ROAD CONVOY...



OVERSLEPT!
WELL, AT LEAST YOU GOT
HERE BEFORE THE OTHERS.
REPORT TO COMPANY SERGEANT-
MAJOR POTTER—AND SHAREN
YOURSELF UP, MAN!



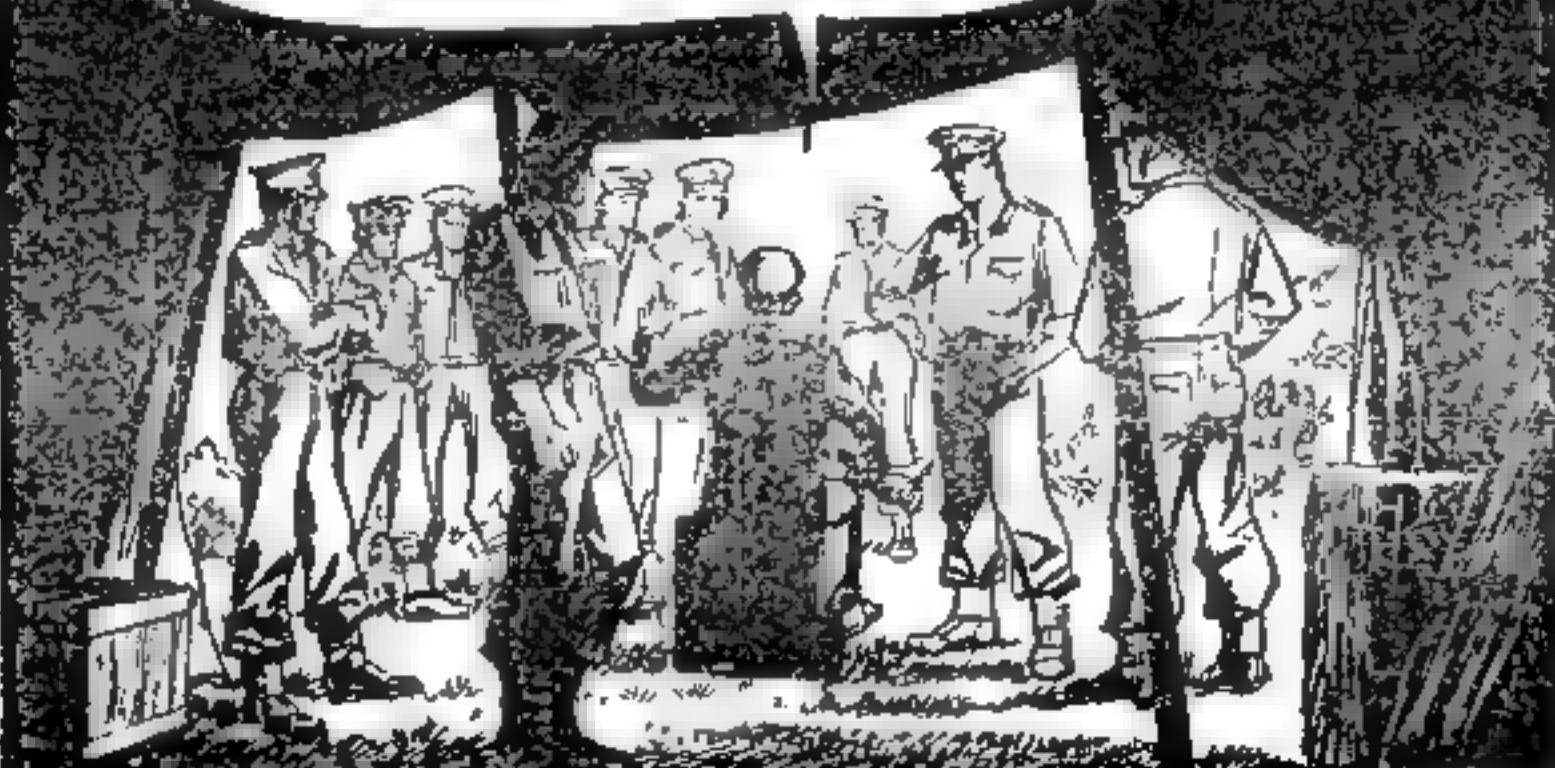
AS SMITHY SHUFFLED OFF LIKE A GANGLING SCARECROW, COLONEL CUTLER GAZED BLEAKLY INTO SPACE...

WE ARE SUPPOSED
TO BE GETTING PICKED
MEN! IF THE REST OF
THE DRAFT ARE
LIKE HIM...



A FEW HOURS LATER NEW ORDERS WERE SENT TO THE 1ST MIDSHIRES. THEY WERE TO MOVE UP TO THE FRONT THAT NIGHT AND RELIEVE THE NEW ZEALANDERS IN FRONT OF CAMPOLLO.

WE ARE TO MAKE OFFENSIVE PATROLS FOR THREE NIGHTS, TO GET USED TO THE GROUND, THEN WE'RE RETURNING HERE FOR TEN DAYS' FINAL TRAINING BEFORE THE BIG PUSH STARTS.



Raw Courage

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BEFORE HE HAD A CHANCE TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH HIS NEW COMRADES, SMITHY WAS POSTED TO 15 PLATOON, 'D' COMPANY, AND PITCHFORKED INTO THE FRONT LINE. AS THE MIDSHIRES' CONVOY WOUND ITS WAY OVER THE RUGGED HILLS A RAIN OF SHELLS FELL AROUND THE TRUCKS.

COR!
THAT WAS CLOSE!
JERRY'S GOT THIS
ROAD TAPED!



THEY MARCHED THE LAST TWO MILES TO THEIR POSITIONS OPPOSITE THE VILLAGE OF MARCANTO. AS THE MIDSHIRES FILED IN, THE WEARY KIWIS FILED OUT.

GOOD LUCK,
BOYS! YOU'RE
GOING TO NEED
IT!



Chapter 3. *Fighting Patrol*

WHEN DAYLIGHT CAME, CAPTAIN MACLEAN, COMMANDING 'D' COMPANY, BRIEFED HIS PLATOON COMMANDERS AND C.S.M. POTTER.

WHEN THE BIG PUSH STARTS, WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE MARCANTO BEFORE WE CAN CROSS THE RIVER AND STORM CAMPELLO. 'D' COMPANY'S JOB TO-NIGHT IS TO SEND A RECONNAISSANCE PATROL INTO MARCANTO. YOU WILL TAKE FIFTEEN PLATOON, RAYNOR.

RIGHT, SIR.



THAT NIGHT, LIEUTENANT RAYNOR MUSTERED HIS PLATOON READY FOR THE PATROL...

WE'VE GOT TO KEEP SILENT, WHATEVER HAPPENS. I'LL COURT-MARTIAL THE FIRST MAN WHO MAKES A SOUND!



THE MOON WAS JUST RISING AS THE PATROL RACED IN SINGLE FILE TO THE RUINS OF THE VILLAGE.



SUDDENLY, A SPANDAU RATTLED NEARBY AND THE BULLETS SCYTHED THE DARKNESS. THE PATROL SANK TO THE GROUND AS DEATH WHISTLED A FEW INCHES ABOVE THEIR HEADS. SMITHY FELT HIS TONGUE GO DRY...



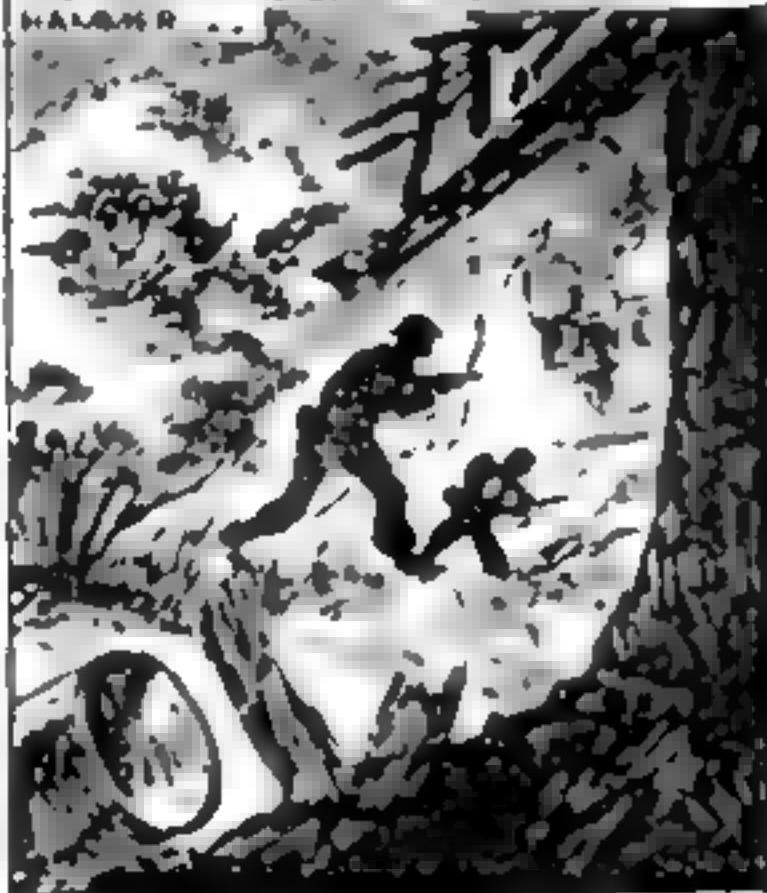
Raw Courage

LIEUTENANT PAYNOR TURNED TO THE MAN NEAREST TO HIM...

SCHMIDT - COME ALONG WITH ME! WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AHEAD.



THE PC AND RAGER TO PLEASE, SCHMIDT FOLLOWED AT THE LIEUTENANT'S HEELS. HIS HEART WAS BEATING LIKE A TRIP HAMMER...



AS THEY WERE MOVING UP AN ODEON DOWN LANE BETWEEN SHATTERED WALLS THE LIEUTENANT SUDDENLY FLUNG HIMSELF TO THE GROUND. AS SCHMIDT FOLLOWED SUIT, HE HEARD PAYNOR'S WHISPER...

JERRIES! AROUND THAT NEXT CORNER!



THE EXPERIENCED OFFICER AND THE GREEN PRIVATE CRAWLED FORWARD INTO A DITCH THAT RAN AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THE LANE. A FEW YARDS ALONG, THE LIEUTENANT HALTED SUDDENLY, JUST AHEAD OF THEM WAS THE REAR OF A GERMAN STRONGPOINT!



THE LIEUTENANT WHISPERED URGENTLY TO SMITHY...



Raw Courage

SMITHY HEAVED HIMSELF UP TO TURN AROUND, TRIPPED, AND TOPPLED INTO THE DITCH WITH A JANGLE OF EQUIPMENT. A STIFLED OATH BURST FROM THE LIEUTENANT...



STARTLED, THE GERMANS WHIRLED AROUND. ONE OF THEM PEERED OVER THE BACK OF THE STRONGPOINT, HIS RIFLE AT THE READY.



THE SIGHT OF THE GERMAN WAS TOO MUCH FOR SMITHY. HE TOOK QUICK AIM AND HIS RIFLE SPAT FLAME. BUT HE WAS TOO EXCITED AND HIS SHOT WENT WIDE.



AT ONCE, THE GERMAN GUNNERS SWUNG THEIR MACHINE GUN ROUND AND POURED A MURDEROUS BURST OF FIRE ALONG THE LANE AND ABOVE THE DITCH.



DESPERATELY, THE LEUTENANT AND THE PRIVATE CRAWLED BACK ALONG THE DITCH, WHILE BULLETS SLASHED ABOVE THE R. HEADS...



Raw Courage

BY THE TIME SMITHY AND RAYNOR REACHED THE REST OF THE PLATOON, BULLETS AND MORTAR SHELLS WERE SCREAMING TOWARDS THE MIDSHIRE LINE FROM EVERY GERMAN WEAPON-PIT IN THE VILLAGE.



WHEN IS PLATOON HAD RETURNED TO 'D' COMPANY'S SECTOR, LIEUTENANT RAYNOR HAD A FEW FURIOUS WORDS WITH SMITHY.

WHY THE BLAZES DID YOU FIRE, YOU TRIGGER-HAPPY YOUNG FOOL? WE COULD HAVE TAKEN THAT STRONGPOINT WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT!

I — I'M SORRY, SIR!



CAPTAIN MACLEAN PLACED THE BLAME ON LIEUTENANT RAYNOR—
BUT THAT WAS LITTLE CONSOLATION TO SMITH.

WITH THE WHOLE PLATOON TO CHOOSE
FROM, RAYNOR, WHY DID YOU PICK
ON SMITH TO GO WITH YOU?
YOU KNEW HE WAS
USELESS!



G.S.M. POTTER ADDED THE FINAL SCORNFUL REMARKS...

DIDN'T THEY
TEACH YOU ANYTHING,
SMITH? ON A RECCE PATROL
YOU DON'T SHOOT UNLESS
YOU HAVE TO!
REMEMBER THAT!

YES, SIR...
IT'S JUST THAT
I GOT EXCITED...



Raw Courage

ONLY CORPORAL FLETCHER WAS SYMPATHETIC... AND SMITHY FELT A WARM GLOW OF GRATITUDE TOWARDS HIM.

NEVER MIND, SMITHY — WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES. IT WAS YOUR FIRST TIME IN ACTION — YOU'LL DO BETTER NEXT TIME.



THREE DAYS LATER, THE 1ST. MIDSHIRES WERE WITHDRAWN ONCE MORE TO SORREGNO TO PLAN THE BIG ATTACK. BY THE TIME THEY GOT THERE, THE REST OF THE DRAFT UNDER SERGEANT MASON HAD ARRIVED.

AH, THESE MEN LOOK MORE LIKE IT! A SOLDIERLY LOOKING BUNCH!

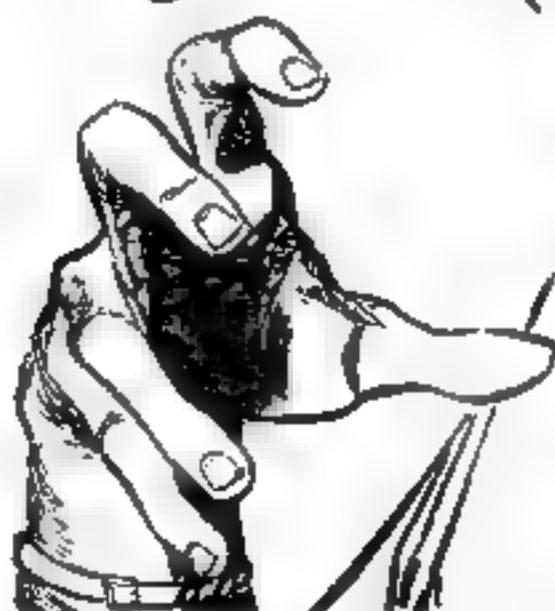


IN THE DAYS OF INTENSIVE TRAINING THAT FOLLOWED,
SMITHY WAS SELDOM OUT OF TROUBLE...

WHAT THE HECK D'YOU THINK
YOU'RE DOING, SMITH? WHY
AREN'T YOU ON PARADE?

I'M SORRY,
SIR. I WAS JUST
WRITING A
LETTER...

WRITING
A LETTER? WHAT
DO YOU THINK THIS
IS? THE NAAFI? GET
ON PARADE, YOU
HORRIBLE
MAN!



How Courage

DAYS OF HARSH TRAINING WENT BY. JUST BEFORE THEY WENT UP TO THE LINE FOR THE BIG ASSAULT, THE BATTALION WAS INSPECTED BY THE BRIGADIER. AS USUAL, SMITHY DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF!

"THIS MAN DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO DRESS HIMSELF PROPERLY! WHAT IS HE? A RECRUIT?"

"ER—YES, SIR. ME WAS IN THE LAST DRAFT."



THAT NIGHT, THE BATTALION MOVED UP TO A POSITION IN FRONT OF MARCANTO. 'A' AND 'C' COMPANIES WERE TO STORM THE VILLAGE. THEN 'D' COMPANY WAS TO ADVANCE THROUGH THEM, CAPTURE THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIVER AND HAN A BARRICADE IN CAMPELLO ITSELF.



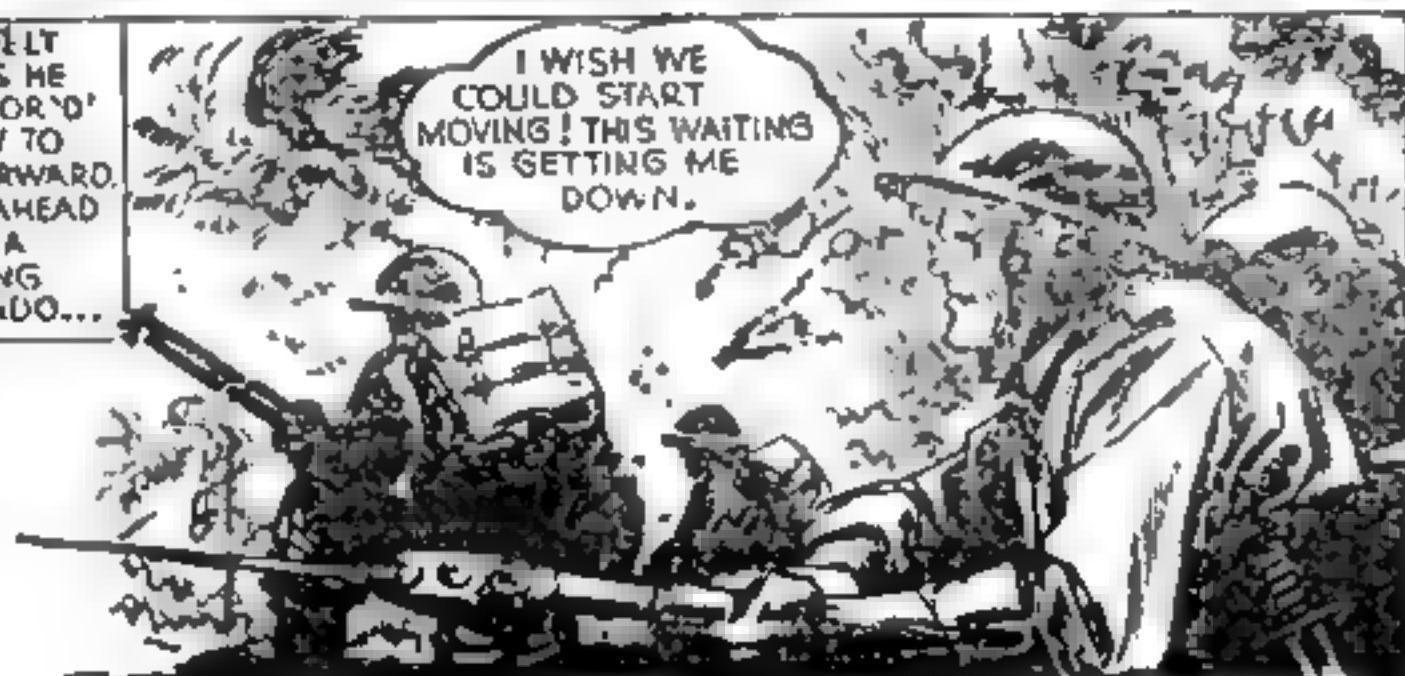
Chapter 4. In Enemy Lines



FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE ZERO-HOUR, THE NIGHT FLAMED IN THE SUDDEN THUNDER OF THE BARRAGE. SHELL-BURSTS AND THE ROAR OF AIRCRAFT FILLED THE AIR. THEN THE THREE ATTACKING COMPANIES ADVANCED...

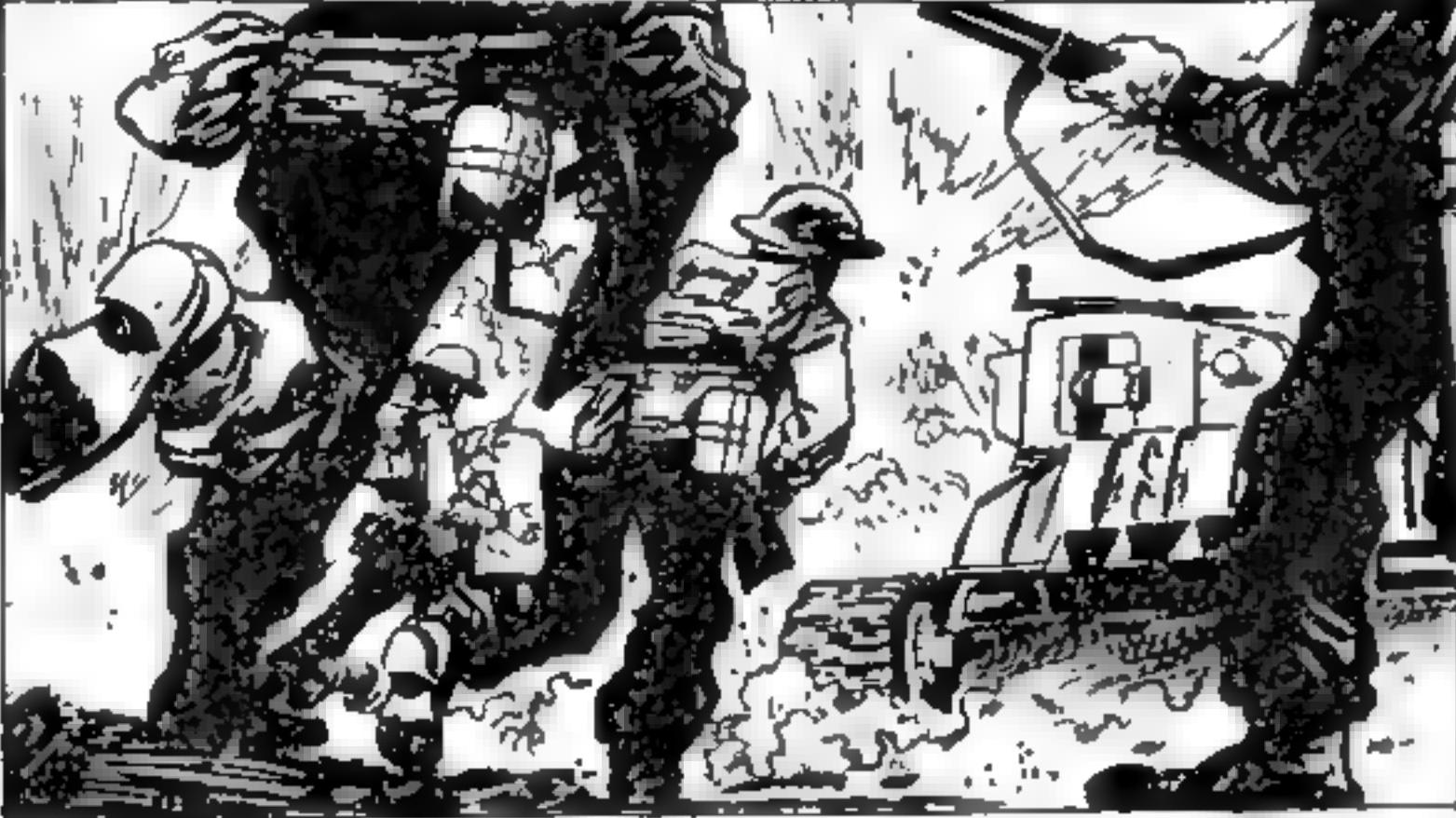
SMITHY FELT TENSE AS HE WAITED FOR 'D' COMPANY TO MOVE FORWARD. THE DIN AHEAD ROSE TO A DEAFENING CRESCEND...

I WISH WE COULD START MOVING! THIS WAITING IS GETTING ME DOWN.



Raw Courage

AT LAST THE ORDER CAME AND 'D' COMPANY MOVED FORWARD THROUGH MARCANTO AND TOWARDS THE BRIDGE. A MURDEROUS HAIL OF FIRE SWEEP ACROSS THE RIVER. IT WAS PLAIN THAT THE GERMANS MEANT TO FIGHT HARD FOR CAMPOLLO...



IT WAS SMITHY'S FIRST TASTE OF REAL BATTLE, AND FOR A MOMENT HE FELT COLD WITH FEAR. SPANDAU'S HAMMERED FURIOUSLY FROM THE NAZI POSITIONS AND THE ACRID SMELL OF CORDITE STUNG HIS NOSTRILS...



BEHIND A CURTAIN OF SMOKE PUT DOWN BY THE MORTAR SECTION, 'D' COMPANY STORMED THE BRIDGE...



BATTLE-WISE AND FIGHTING FIT, THE MIDSHIRES SMASHED THEIR WAY INTO THE TOWN. STRONG AS A BULL AND ACHING TO PROVE HIMSELF AS A SOLDIER, SMITHY WAS UP AMONG THE LEADERS

IF I FOLLOW CAPTAIN MACLEAN I CAN'T GO FAR WRONG... WISH DAD COULD SEE ME NOW!



Raw Courage

SMITHY NEVER KNEW JUST HOW IT HAPPENED, BUT SUDDENLY HE FOUND HIMSELF OUT ON HIS OWN, LYING PANTING BEHIND A SMOKING HEAP OF RUBBLE...



THE GERMANS IN CAMPELLO WERE FAR STRONGER THAN THE ALLIED COMMAND HAD ESTIMATED. NOW THE GERMAN CORPS COMMANDER MADE HIS FIRST COUNTER-STROKE...

THE ENEMY ARE IN THE TOWN, BUT THEIR FORCES ARE SPLIT UP AND DISORGANISED. TELL D'ETRICH TO SEND IN HIS JAEGER BATTALION AND THROW THE ENGLANDERS BACK OVER THE RIVER!



LYING IN THE RUINS OF A SHATTERED HOUSE, SMITHY SAW THE FIRST SIGNS OF THE GERMAN COUNTER-MOVE. FOUR HEAVY TANKS CAME CLANKING ACROSS THE SMASHED FILES OF BRICKWORK, SWARMS OF GREY-CLAD INFANTRYMEN IN THEIR WAKE.



SIMITH FLATTENED HIMSELF INTO THE DUST AND LAY MOTIONLESS AS THE ATTACK FLOODED PAST HIM.



ALL THROUGH THE LONG HOURS OF DAYLIGHT HE LAY LOW, HOLDING HIS BREATH WHENEVER A GERMAN PASSED NEAR HIM. AT LONG LAST DARKNESS CAME AND HE SET OUT TO TRY TO GET BACK TO HIS OWN LINES.



Raw Courage

FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE BRIDGE CAME THE CEASELESS CHATTER OF SMALL-ARMS FIRE AND THE DEEPER CRASH OF MORTAR BOMBS. BUT FARTHER TO THE WEST, WHERE THE TOWN STRAGGLED INTO SCRUBBY WOODLAND, THINGS WERE QUENTER.



SLIPPING BEH ND A GERMAN MORTAR BATTERY, SMITHY PASSED THROUGH THE OUTSK RTS OF THE TOWN AND REACHED A SCRUB-COVERED RAVINE.

IF I FOLLOW THIS RAVINE DOWN TO THE RIVER, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO SWIM ACROSS...



HE SKIRTED THE EDGE OF THE RAVINE FOR A WHILE AND STIFFENED SUDDENLY AS HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF MOVEMENT IN THE SCRUB BELOW HIM. THEN HIS EYES WIDENED IN SURPRISE...

"LUMME! THAT'S CAPTAIN MACLEAN IN THE LEAD, AND SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER BEHIND HIM! THEY'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY! THEY'LL RUN SMACK INTO THE JERRIES..."



BUT, AS IT HAPPENED, CAPTAIN MACLEAN KNEW VERY WELL WHAT HE WAS DOING! HE HAD ALREADY DISCOVERED THAT THE GERMANS WERE HOLDING THE LOWER END OF THE RAVINE IN STRENGTH AND THAT THERE WAS NO WAY OUT IN THAT DIRECTION...

"WE'LL LEAVE THE RAVINE HIGHER UP, MAKE A WIDE DETOUR AND REACH THE RIVER FARTHER TO THE SOUTH."

"RIGHT, SIR.
LET'S HOPE JERRY DOESN'T SPOT US!"



Raw Courage

SUDDENLY, A STARTLED GALENT CAME FROM LANCE CORPORAL BOWMAN...

ONE OF OUR
MEN, SIR! RIGHT
ON THE SKYLINE!



WHO IS IT?
NO, DON'T TELL
ME...

THAT'S
RIGHT, SIR —
IT'S PRIVATE
SMITH!

A FRANTIC EXCLAMATION BROKE
FROM THE CAPTAIN...

KEEP
STILL, MEN!
HE MAY NOT
SEE US!



BUT IT WAS TOO LATE—SMITHY HAD NOT ONLY SEEN THEM, HE WAS ON HIS WAY TOWARDS THEM, SHOUTING AT THE TOP OF HIS VOICE!

YOU'RE
HEADING THE
WRONG WAY, SIR!
YOU'RE GOING
TOWARDS THE
JERRIES...



A GERMAN POST FARTHER ALONG THE RAVINE HAD ALREADY SIGHTED SMITHY. A RIFLEMAN HAD FIXED THE YOUNG SOLDIER IN HIS SIGHTS, WHEN THE LEUTNANT IN COMMAND STOPPED HIM.

WAIT! HE HAS
SEEN SOME OF HIS
FRIENDS! THERE MUST
BE OTHER ENGLANDERS
DOWN THERE!





THERE THEY
ARE, HERR LEUTNANT!
HIDING IN THOSE BUSHES
IN THE RAVINE BED!

CAPTAIN MACLEAN GAVE AN AGONISED GROAN AS A STORM OF BULLETS SENT
HIM AND HIS MEN DIVING FOR COVER.



THAT FOOL
SMITH! HE'S GIVEN
AWAY OUR POSITION!

AAGHH!

SOME OF THE GERMANS HAD SWITCHED THEIR ATTENTION TO SMITHY AND THREW A WHISTLING BARRIER OF BULLETS BETWEEN HIM AND THE MEN HE HAD MISTAKENLY TRIED TO HELP. DESPERATELY, HE FLUNG HIMSELF BEHIND COVER...



JERRIES!
STONE THE CROWS!
I DIDN'T SEE
THEM!

THINKING THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH A FEW BROKEN-SPRITED AND DEFEATED STRAGGLERS, THE GERMAN OFFICER LED HIS MEN DOWN INTO THE RAVINE FOR THE KILL!



FOLLOW ME!
WE WILL FINISH
THESE STUPID
ENGLANDERS!

Raw Courage

LEUTNANT HANS STOFFEL SOON DISCOVERED HIS MISTAKE, FOR HE AND HIS MEN HAD GONE BARELY TEN YARDS BEFORE A SAVAGE TORNADO OF FIRE RAKED THEM...



FROM HIS VANTAGE POINT UP ON THE SIDE OF THE RAVINE, SMITHY EAGERLY TRIED TO JOIN IN. BUT HIS RIFLE BARREL WAS JAMMED WITH EARTH... AND WHEN HE PRESSED THE TRIGGER, THE RECOIL NEARLY BROKE HIS SHOULDER!

BY THE TIME SMITHY, DAZED AND BLEEDING, REACHED CAPTAIN MACLEAN, THE GERMAN LEUTNANT AND HIS MEN WERE LYING DEAD ON THE SLOPE OF THE RAVINE. THE WELCOME SMITHY RECEIVED WAS HARDLY WHAT HE HAD EXPECTED...

"YOU CRACK-BRAINED IDIOT, SMITH! ARE YOU TRYING TO GET US ALL KILLED?"



"...AND WHERE'S YOUR RIFLE, MAN? THERE'S NO NEED TO PANIC JUST BECAUSE YOU COME UNDER FIRE!"



DAZED AND BEWILDERED, SMITHY KEPT SILENT, AND WAS SOON TRAILING ALONG AFTER THE CAPTAIN AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR AS THEY CREEP OFF ONCE MORE IN THEIR WIDE DETOUR.



44 Row Courage

IT SEEMED TO SMITHY THAT THEY TOILED ALONG FOR MILES. AT DAWN THEY FOUND A GAP IN THE LINES AND REACHED THE RIVER. ON THE OTHER SIDE WAS FRIENDLY TERRITORY.

"WE'LL HAVE TO SWIM LIGHT—
SO DUMP YOUR GEAR! I HATE
TO LEAVE WEAPONS BEHIND,
BUT THERE'S NOTHING
ELSE FOR IT."



EVEN FOR A STRONG SWIMMER, IT WAS A TOUGH STRUGGLE THROUGH THE ICY WATER. SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER WAS THE FIRST TO REACH THE FAR BANK...

(Screams)

"COME ON,
LADS! YOU'VE
NEARLY MADE
IT!"



MEANWHILE THE REMNANTS OF SHATTERED 'D' COMPANY, HANGING DESPERATELY TO A TINY BRIDGEHEAD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF CAMPELLO, HAD BEEN RELIEVED. ONLY A FEW DAZED, HAGGARD MEN REACHED THE RESERVE AREA.



LIEUTENANT RAYNOR REPORTED TO COLONEL CUTLER.

WE GOT SPLIT UP INTO SMALL GROUPS IN CAMPELLO, SIR. THE JERRIES COUNTER-ATTACKED AND SURROUNDED THE TOWN.

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF IT, RAYNOR. THE ENEMY IS MUCH STRONGER HERE THAN THE TOP BRASS THINK...



Raw Courage

TWO HOURS LATER CAPTAIN MACLEAN'S SMALL PARTY REPORTED BACK. THE CAPTAIN HAD A STORMY INTERVIEW WITH THE COLONEL... SPOKE SAVAGELY...



SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER HAD A
BRILLIANT IDEA...

WE HAD A CHIT FROM BRIGADE
ASKING US TO SEND A MAN ON A
COOKERY COURSE, SIR. WHY NOT
SEND SMITH? HE'LL END UP
AS A BRIGADE COOK...



SMITHY WAS STUNNED WHEN HE HEARD
THE NEWS...

COOKERY,
SIR? BUT—BUT
I DON'T WANT TO
BE A COOK!

IN THIS
UNIT, SMITH,
OBEY ORDERS!
REPORT TO BRIGADE
H.Q. RIGHT
AWAY.



Chapter 5. A Medal for Courage

THAT NIGHT SMITHY HAD WALKED TO BRIGADE H.Q., IN AN ORCHARD HALF A MILE BEHIND THE LINES. FOR A LONG TIME HE LAY AWAKE, THINKING BITTERLY OF THE EVENTS OF THE DAY...

A COOK! HOW AM I EVER GOING TO FACE DAD AGAIN?



THEY ALL SAY
I'LL NEVER MAKE A
SOLDIER — BUT I'VE ALWAYS
DONE MY BEST, AND
I'VE NEVER PLAYED
THE COWARD...



Raw Courage



AS THE TANKS RUMBLED PAST, FIRING WILDLY,
HE GRABBED HIS RIFLE AND EQUIPMENT AND
DIVED FOR A DITCH.



SPASMODIC FIRING BROKE OUT AS A FEW ISOLATED TROOPS RESISTED DESPERATELY. SMITHY WAS TEMPTED TO JOIN THEM - BUT THE BITTERNESS IN HIS HEART STOPPED HIM.

WHY SHOULD I DO ANYTHING? ONLY SOLDIERS FIGHT - AND THEY SAY I'M NO SOLDIER!



AS TIME PASSED THE BATTLE SURGED FARTHER AWAY, AND SOON AFTER DAWN A SMALL PARTY OF BRITISH PRISONERS WERE MARCHED ALONG THE ROAD.

COR!
SERGEANT-MAJOR
POTTER'S IN THAT
BUNCH!



Raw Courage

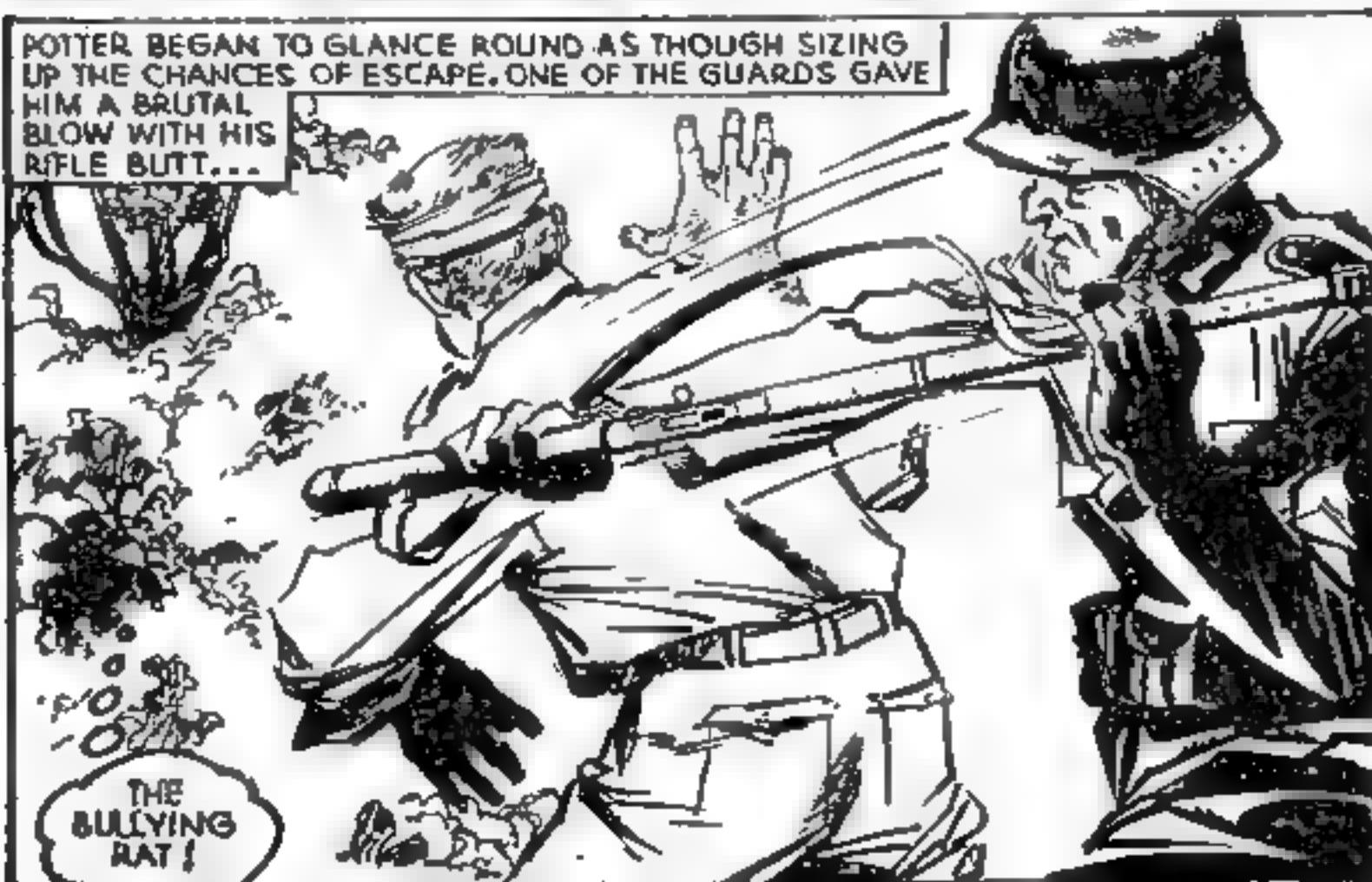
QUIETLY SMITHY WORMED HIS WAY ALONG THE DITCH, TILL HE COULD SEE POTTER CLEARLY. THE SERGEANT-MAJOR'S HEAD WAS BANDAGED.

HE'S WOUNDED, BUT IT TAKES A LOT TO KNOCK OUT A BLOKE LIKE POTTER.



POTTER BEGAN TO GLANCE ROUND AS THOUGH SIZING UP THE CHANCES OF ESCAPE. ONE OF THE GUARDS GAVE HIM A BRUTAL BLOW WITH HIS RIFLE BUTT...

THE BULLYING RAT!



BUT THE MEMORY OF SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER'S WORDS RETURNED, RANKLING...

BUT WHY
SHOULD I STICK MY
NECK OUT HELPING HIM?
HE THINKS I'M NO GOOD...
NEVER MAKE A
SOLDIER...



I COULD SLUG
THE GUARDS, AND HELP
POTTER ESCAPE! WE COULD MAKE
A DASH FOR IT... THERE'S PLENTY
OF COVER AROUND HERE, AND
NO OTHER JERRIES
CLOSE...



SMITHY BURROWED DOWN UNDER COVER AGAIN—
BUT HIS CONSCIENCE NAGGED HIM.



IF I LET MYSELF
BE CAPTURED
WITHOUT PUTTING UP
A FIGHT I'LL NEVER BE
ABLE TO LOOK DAD IN
THE FACE AGAIN!
I'VE GOT TO DO
SOMETHING...

SMITHY'S CHANCE CAME WHEN A SALVO OF BRITISH SHELLS BURST ALONG THE ROAD. THE TWO GERMAN GUARDS DUCKED INSTINCTIVELY—AND IN A FLASH SMITHY WAS ON THEM.



THE SECOND GERMAN WHIRLED—AND SMITHY FIRED FROM THE HIP...





AFTER A WHILE THEY HALTED, HIDING AMONG SOME TREES WHILE THEY GOT THEIR BEARINGS.

...I WAS KNOCKED OUT BY A MORTAR BOMB. WHEN I CAME TO I WAS A PRISONER. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

I WAS ASLEEP IN THE ORANGE GROVE, S.R. THE NEXT THING I KNEW JERRY TANKS WERE OVERRUNNING BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS.

Raw Courage

THE SERGEANT-MAJOR LISTENED INTENTLY. FROM THE DISTANCE CAME THE THUNDEROUS DIN OF BATTLE...

IT SOUNDS AS IF OUR CHAPS HAVE CHECKED THE JERRIES. OUR DUTY NOW IS TO GET BACK TO THEM.



KEEPING UNDER COVER, THE PRIVATE AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR SLIPPED FORWARD. THERE WERE GERMANS EVERYWHERE NOW, BUT BRITISH SHELLS WERE PLASTERING THEM, AND LOW-FLYING FIGHTER BOMBERS RAKED THEM WITH CANNON AND MACHINE-GUNS...

AT ONE SPOT THEY FOUND SOME OF THE R OWN REGIMENT LYING WHERE THEY HAD PLAINLY FOUGHT TO THE LAST MAN. POTTER'S FACE WAS GRIM AS HE PICKED UP TWO TOMMY-GUNS AND HANDED ONE TO SMITHY.



CLOSER TO THE FIGHTING, IT BECAME HARDER TO KEEP OUT OF SIGHT. ONCE THEY HAD TO FEIGN DEATH AS A GERMAN GUN TEAM WENT HURRYING PAST.



Raw Courage

WHEN IT WAS SAFE THEY MOVED ON AGAIN, DARTING FROM COVER TO COVER, DRAWING EVER CLOSER TO THE INFERNO WHERE FRESH BRITISH TROOPS WERE STEMMING THE GERMAN ADVANCE.



BEFORE THE HORRIFIED SERGEANT-MAJOR COULD STOP HIM, SMITHY, TRIGGER-HAPPY AS EVER, RAISED HIS TOMMY GUN AND CUT LOOSE...



THE STARTLED MORTARMEN TOOK COVER AND BEGAN TO SHOOT BACK. BULLETS CRACKED AND SANG VICIOUSLY ON ALL SIDES OF SMITHY AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR.

WHY IS IT THAT WHENEVER WE NEED TO BE QUIET, YOU START A ROW?
WE WERE ALMOST HOME —
NOW WE'LL HAVE TO SHOOT OUR WAY OUT!

S-SORRY, SIR!



WITH BULLETS WHINING AROUND THEM, THE TWO FUGITIVES DIVED INTO THE COVER OF A SUNKEN ROAD — ONLY TO FIND THAT A GERMAN MACHINE GUN WAS POSTED DEAD AHEAD!

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING FOR IT,
SMITH — WE'LL RUSH 'EM!

OKAY, SIR!



Raw Courage

SMITHY LEAPED FORWARD, HIS TOMMY-GUN HAMMERING A STREAM OF LEAD. THE SPANDAU GUNNERS WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE...



A BURLY OFFICER RAISED HIS LUGER, AND DEATH REACHED FOR SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER, BUT SMITHY CRACKED THE HEEL OF HIS GUN INTO THE OFFICER'S MIDRIFF...



SWIFTLY THE TWO MEN RACED AWAY FROM THE SHATTERED NAZI MACHINE-GUN POST.



Raw Courage

\$4

AHEAD OF THEM LAY A BATTERED FARMHOUSE THAT SEEMED TO BE IN NO-MAN'S-LAND. SMITHY AND POTTER HEADED TOWARDS IT. THEN A BULLET SMASHED INTO SMITHY'S THIGH...



POTTER ALMOST CARRIED SMITHY THOSE LAST FEW DESPERATE YARDS TO COVER...

HANG ON!
WE'RE NEARLY THERE!



Raw Courage

ONCE UNDER COVER, POTTER BANDAGED SMITHY'S LEG, THEN SUDDENLY THE TIDE OF BATTLE FLOWED THE OTHER WAY AND A BRITISH ARMoured COLUMN CAME CRASHING FORWARD IN A FURIOUS COUNTER-STROKE!

WHAT DID I TELL YOU, LAD?
THIS IS WHERE OUR LADS GET THEIR OWN BACK!



WHEN THE DIN SUBSIDED TWO HOURS LATER, THE GERMANS HAD BEEN DRIVEN BACK MORE THAN TWO MILES. AS STRETCHER-BEARERS CAME TO COLLECT SMITHY, SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER SPOKE A FEW FINAL WORDS TO HIM...

THERE'S ONE THING I'D LIKE YOU TO KNOW, SMITH. YOU MAY NOT BE A PARADE-GROUND SOLDIER, BUT YOU'RE A DARNED GOOD FIGHTING MAN, I'M GOING TO RECOMMEND YOU FOR A MEDAL!



PRIDE AND A GREAT HAPPINESS SWELLED SMITHY'S HEART. HE TRIED TO SPEAK, BUT NO WORDS WOULD COME...



TWO WEEKS LATER, THE 1ST. MIDSHIRES, FIFTY PER CENT BELOW STRENGTH, WERE CAMPED WELL BEHIND THE LINES, AWAITING A BIG INTAKE OF NEW MEN. C.S.M. POTTER WAS SPEAKING TO CAPTAIN MACLEAN...

"I'M GLAD SMITH'S GETTING HIS MEDAL—BUT IT'S A LOAD OFF MY MIND NOW HE'S GONE. HE WAS A PROBLEM IF EVER THERE WAS ONE, SIR."



Raw Courage

SOON POTTER WAS STRIDING OFF TO INSPECT THE NEW DRAFT. IT WAS ALL OLD STUFF TO HIM. THEY CAME TO HIM GREEN AND RAW AND HE MADE SOLDIERS OUT OF THEM...



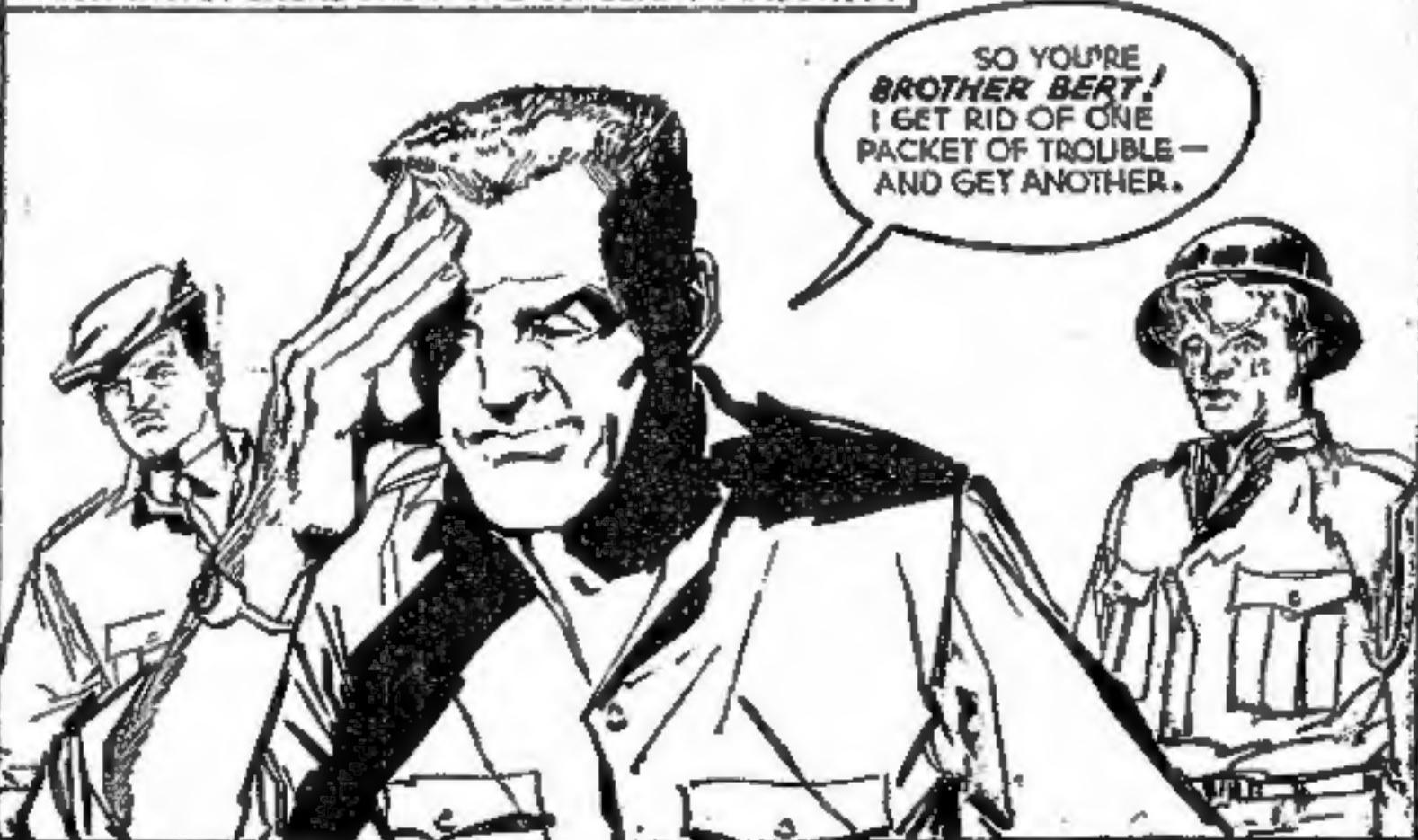
POTTER'S EYES FLICKERED OVER THE MEN—AND WIDENED IN HORROR AS THEY FELL ON ONE MAN AT THE END OF THE REAR RANK. THERE WAS SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT THE SCRUFFY FIGURE...



AS POTTER SPOKE TO HIM, THE NEW MAN STOOD AT ATTENTION, HIS RUMPLED KHAKI UNIFORM HANGING LOOSELY ABOUT HIM, LIKE AN OLD BELL TENT...



A LOW MOAN BROKE FROM THE SERGEANT-MAJOR...



SUDDENLY COMPANY SERGEANT-MAJOR POTTER THOUGHT BACK—TO A SCENE IN AN ORANGE-GROVE TWO WEEKS BEFORE, WHEN PRIVATE JOHN SMITH HAD SHOWN HIMSELF IN HIS TRUE LIGHT, AS A FIGHTING SOLDIER, COURAGEOUS AND LOYAL. HIS STERN FEATURES BROKE INTO A SMILE...

YOU'RE A SCRUFFY, HORRIBLE LITTLE MAN—SAME AS YOUR BROTHER. BUT IF YOU CAN FIGHT HALF AS WELL AS HE CAN, YOU'LL DO!

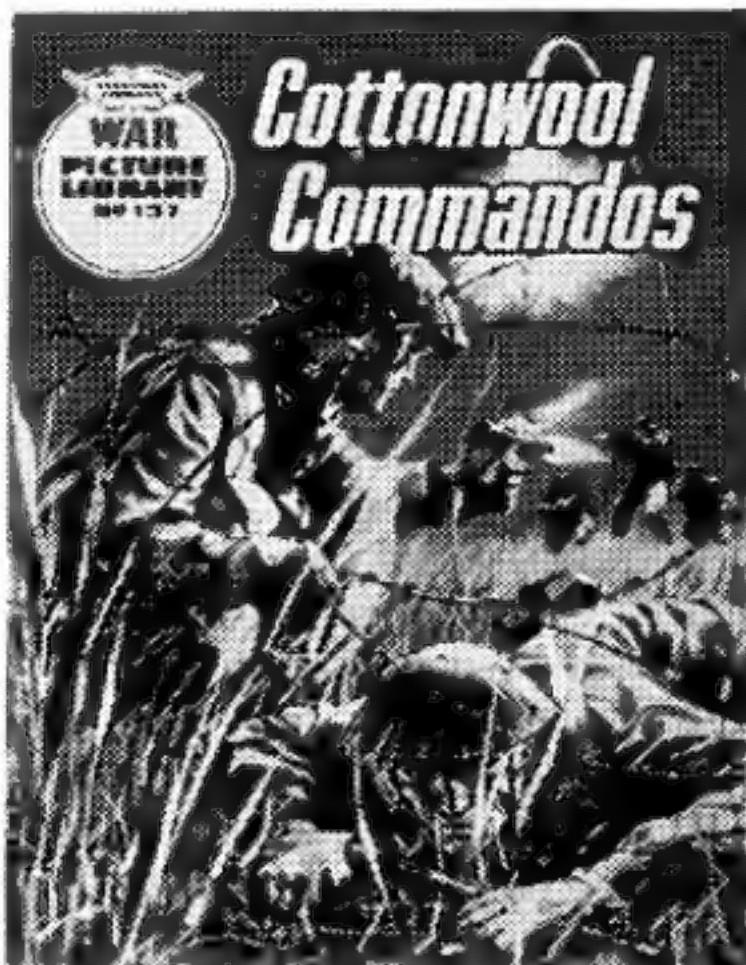


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